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CENSUS STATISTICS OF SPECIAL CLASSES.

BY JOHN KOREN.

Elaborate statistical investigations of the dependent, defective, and delinquent classes, have become a part of the regular decennial task of the United States Census Office. In the early days the census authorities contented themselves with an enumeration of persons belonging to these classes; that is, sought chiefly to ascertain their numerical strength. Although it has remained a primary purpose to discover the extent of the phenomena of pauperism, insanity, feeble-mindedness, crime, etc., the efforts to probe deeper into these problems have been elaborated from decade to decade. In other words, from being a simple enumeration of the so-called special classes, the census work of recent years has assumed the character of far-reaching statistical research, with a view of gauging not only their distribution, sources in the population, increase or decrease, but also the causes that produce paupers, criminals, insane persons, etc. It is, therefore, a very comprehensive term when we speak of a census of the special classes.

Obviously, the ever-widening scope of these statistical studies finds its explanation in a growing demand for more detailed information. The enormous burden borne by the community in the support both of the unfortunate and the vicious members of society would seem to call for some inquiry, let alone the direct bearing it should have upon questions of policy and of administration.

Yet the results of these census investigations have never given general satisfaction. Indeed, one might question whether they have been at all commensurate with the money and energy expended upon them. Let not this be under-

stood as reflecting upon the industry, ability, and conscientious endeavor of the officials in charge of the various censuses. In truth, unless they had been endowed with super-human qualities, they could not have produced adequate statistics of the dependent, defective, and delinquent classes under the existing conditions. The difficulties they had to contend with, and which still prevail more or less, are partly inherent and partly attributable to the limitations under which the work has been done,—limitations both as to methods and authority in law.

To obtain statistical data about a human being which, when properly collated, will yield all one desires to know about him, is at best a difficult operation. But when the individual concerned happens to be a pauper or criminal about whom little can be learned, and it is attempted to reason out from the scant facts obtainable why he is a pauper or criminal, the experiment becomes somewhat hazardous. Another difficulty has been that the records of public and private institutions are the main, if not the only, sources of information; and these records are notoriously defective, and, in some instances, quite unreliable. Furthermore, in the collection of material the Census Office has been obliged to employ untrained and not infrequently rather ignorant enumerators. Again, under the acts governing the census it has until now been necessary to make the enumeration of the special classes as of a given date; that is, the entire dependent, defective, and delinquent population has been made the basis for the ensuing tabulations. No attempt could be made to measure the movement of any of the special classes for a given period. Finally, the census definition of the special classes has never been sufficiently comprehensive; and the prescribed methods of work have effectually prohibited officials from covering the different fields in the manner, it is presumed, they desired to cover them.

In justice to the work done in the previous censuses, it seems only fair to call attention to the many limitations

under which the enumeration of the special classes has been carried on. The establishment of a permanent Census Office was hailed with joy, also because it held out promise of improvement in future work of this particular sort. While there certainly could be no excuse for lack of improvement in this branch of census work now in the course of completion for the present decade, it is none the less true that the act of Congress governing it continues to impose limitations which make even an approach toward an ideal investigation exceedingly difficult and in some respects impossible. The purpose of this article is to point out the respects in which the permanent census act operates to the disadvantage of the work under consideration, as well as the amendments needed to place it on an economical and scientific basis for the future.

For the sake of clearness it is worth while to reproduce so much of section 7 of the Act of March 6, 1902 (providing for the establishment of a permanent Census Office), as relates to the dependent, defective, and delinquent classes:—

After the completion and return of the enumeration and of the work upon the schedules relating to the products of agriculture and to manufacturing and mechanical establishments provided for in section 7 of this act, the Director of the Census is hereby authorized decennially to collect statistics relating to special classes, including the insane, feeble-minded, deaf, dumb, and blind; to crime, pauperism, and benevolence, including prisoners, paupers, juvenile delinquents, and inmates of benevolent and reformatory institutions. And the Director of the Census shall prepare schedules containing such interrogatories as shall in his judgment be best adapted to elicit the information required under these subjects, with such specifications, divisions, and particulars under each head as he shall deem necessary to that end; and all reports prepared under the provisions of this section shall be designated as "Special Reports of the Census Office." *Provided*, That the statistics of special classes and of crime, pauperism, and benevolence specified in this section shall be restricted to institutions containing such classes and the Director of the Census is authorized and directed to

collect statistics relating to all the deaf, dumb, and blind, notwithstanding the restrictions and limitations contained in section 8 of said act, entitled "An Act to provide for taking the Twelfth and subsequent censuses." *Provided*, That, in taking the census of said classes, the inquiries shall be confined to the following four questions; namely, name, age, sex, and post-office address.

The fundamental shortcomings of this section are:—

1. The decennial limitation.
2. The imperfect definition of the special classes.
3. The restriction of the enumeration to inmates of institutions.
4. The narrow scope given the investigation relative to the deaf, dumb, and blind.

So far as the limitation of the enumeration of the special classes to decades is not merely an inheritance from the time when the census was organized for decennial service only, it appears to be based on the assumption that this work is too costly to be undertaken profitably more than once in ten years, and that, unless thus restricted, it is likely to interfere with the more important services of the Census Office.

Perhaps no one would have the temerity to argue in favor of the complete enumeration of the special classes on the elaborate scale hitherto projected more frequently than once a decade, nor is there perhaps any urgent demand for it. The point is that a decennial enumeration becomes too expensive, unless we can provide the means of obtaining better results than are now in sight.

Unlike the enumeration of the active population, that of the dependent, defective, and delinquent classes depends for its completeness and accuracy upon local records, chiefly of an institutional nature, for the reason that the greater number of those to be dealt with are to be found within institutions. A direct means of securing the much-needed improvement in such records is more frequent official demands for

the information they should contain. The educational value in this respect of a census investigation is being abundantly demonstrated. Moreover, now as in the future, the enumerators employed in institutions will for the greater part be institution officials, and not, as formerly, special agents or the usual population enumerators. But to come into contact with institutions only during twelve months of the decade, and to train enumerators to do efficient work, and then to remain out of touch with the institutions they represent until another ten years have gone by, means a great waste of time and effort when it becomes necessary to re-establish relations, and retards in a deplorable manner progress toward more satisfactory returns. Experience has also shown that, after the lapse of ten years, even much of the knowledge as to which institutions and organizations to deal with in the preparation for a new census has been lost. In other words, the law, as it now stands, prevents continuity in this line of census work. Besides, it necessitates the spending of much money and time in preparatory effort which could easily be obviated.

For the purpose, then, of making the most of a decennial enumeration, it seems imperative that the Bureau of the Census should keep in touch with institutions and organizations in charge of the classes under consideration. One way of doing this profitably is by means of biennial reports dealing with such matters as the movement of population in institutions and the like.

It may be argued that reports concerned merely with such elementary facts might lead to confusion in regard to paupers, insane, and feeble-minded, if it be the intention at the same time, as advocated below, to go beyond inmates of institutions in the regular decennial enumerations. There is, however, no necessity for prescribing in the law just what subjects shall be dealt with in supplementary reports. It may also be quite possible to cover the movement of population in all institutions without bringing the resulting statis-

ties into conflict with those of other investigations. Intensive decennial inquiries reaching all who belong to one of the special classes would not necessarily prevent a separate report upon those of the same class to be found within institutions. Besides, there is at least one special class which will not be sought outside institutions. For some time to come our only means of gauging the delinquent portion of our population will be furnished by prison returns. It is inconceivable that in the present state of confusion much information can be extracted from court dockets, statistics of arrests, and the like; and studies of crime movement based simply on decennial prison returns would leave us very much where we now are,—in the dark. It would be an enormous advantage to be enabled to follow the movement of population in prisons once in two or three years.

So far as the investigation pertaining to benevolence is concerned, the decennial limitation is particularly unfortunate. It was found wholly impracticable to attempt a collection of personal statistics of inmates of benevolent institutions, with the idea of making one schedule cover all classes. Instead, what will virtually be a national directory of benevolent institutions has been projected. The task of gathering material for it has been much more difficult than anticipated; but it is being successfully accomplished. It is absolutely certain, however, that, if another decade is permitted to go by before a new and improved edition of this work is issued, the job must practically be done *de novo*. The data will to some extent be obsolete in five years or less. The compilation will cease to be a *reliable* handbook of benevolent institutions. Many new institutions will have sprung up, others will have ceased to exist, and others again will have enlarged or altered their functions or may have been moved to new localities. To re-establish relations with some five thousand institutions scattered all over the country is no mean undertaking. Furthermore, the investigation pertaining to benevolence, now under way, ought properly to

lead to more specialized efforts in the future. That what for lack of a better term may be called a statistical directory of benevolent institutions will yield all we want to know about the subject of benevolence would be an unreasonable expectation. But that more specialized investigations can be undertaken so long as a decennial restriction prevails is almost unthinkable. In short, it is an extravagant and wasteful method which necessitates the duplication of work because of the interval allowed to elapse between efforts.

The decennial limitation is, as it were, doubly guarded by the proviso that inquiries concerning the special classes may not be undertaken until "after the completion and return of the enumeration and of the work upon the subjects relating to the products of agriculture and of manufacturing and mechanical establishments." There may be sound reasons why it should be expressly forbidden to allow any other undertaking to interfere with the more obviously important parts of the census. But, if a safeguard be necessary, it may be secured, perhaps, through a general proviso rather than by the present hard-and-fast prohibition.

There is, finally, the objection to the decennial limitation that it prevents the retention of a properly organized force to deal with the statistics of the special classes. Some time in the near future the present investigation will be completed. Under the law it cannot be renewed before the end of another ten years. The aptitude, knowledge, and experience gained in this branch of statistical work through present efforts will to a large extent be lost to the office ten years hence. Next time other men will have to acquire experience and aptitude, at considerable cost both to the office and to themselves. It is not even certain that the valuable material in the shape of publications of all kinds which have been collected will be preserved, and it is quite improbable that it will be augmented and kept up to date. For the sake of continuity in this line of statistical work, and in order to make results correspond to the cost, it would seem essential to keep together

at least the skeleton of a trained force; and this could be accomplished if a larger opportunity were offered for biennial reports on the subjects mentioned above or special reports on matters not now clearly specified in the law. Is it not worth while to develop specialists for investigations relative to the dependent, defective, and delinquent classes? To deny this would almost be equivalent to denying that the entire line of statistical research under consideration is worth while. Dictates of economy, as well as of science, demand therefore that this work should not be left to a decennially collected force, which is from the nature of the case likely to be more or less of a "scrub" force.

The limitation under consideration is perhaps not an obstacle to a special study of the cost to the public of supporting the members of the special classes,—a topic which hitherto has not received due attention. But this is too large and intricate a subject to be treated incidentally to a collection of personal statistics. In order to do full justice to it, much careful preparation is needed and a long time of investigation. It should therefore be the subject of a special inquiry. How far there is authority in the present law for such an undertaking is not evident.

While there are matters forming fitting subjects for special reports other than those now being prepared, and for which there is a definite demand that cannot easily be disregarded, the chief reason for wishing to have the decennial limitation abolished is that the work called for by the present law cannot be carried on to the best advantage.

The definition of the special classes is imperfect. Aside from the fact that the phraseology of the law is somewhat nebulous, it omits mention altogether of at least one dependent class; namely, the dependent children, both in and outside institutions. As presently will be shown, it is useless to attempt an enumeration of dependent children so long as we are restricted to inmates of institutions. But, in the absence of any specific mention of this class, it would hardly

be competent, under the present law, to consider it at all, except as a part of the pauper class. Yet it would hardly be just, and certainly not meet with approval, to lump all dependent children with aged inmates of almshouses. Dependent children form a very distinct class. They are more and more withdrawn from the kind of care usually afforded paupers, and are surely sufficiently numerous and important to receive separate treatment.

It has been urged by prominent alienists that the epileptics be included in future enumerations. Whether this be feasible is open to some doubt. Meanwhile the scientific as well as the practical value of learning more about these unfortunates should not be entirely overlooked.

By a proper recasting of the definition of the special classes it will also be possible to remove every doubt in regard to the permissibility of making a separate study of the cost of supporting them.

A third objection to the law in its present form is that it confines the enumeration of the special classes to inmates of institutions. So far as crime is concerned, it is probably necessary for the present to stick to institutions in any endeavor to measure it quantitatively. Conclusive statistics of pauperism, on the other hand, cannot be secured without regard to the outdoor poor. It is significant that a superficial reading of the returns of population in almshouses as of December 31, 1903, points to a much smaller increase in this class than might reasonably have been expected. This is the more noteworthy because the last census was taken at the season when the number of inmates is usually below the average for the year. The explanation is obviously not that we have lived in a decade of unexampled prosperity, but that want is more and more being relieved by substitutes for institutional care, and that almshouse administration is no longer the old hit-or-miss affair which made every poorhouse the receptacle for the unworthy along with the worthy poor.

The answer to the common argument that adequate statistics of the outdoor poor cannot be obtained is that hitherto no systematic effort has been made to collect them. If one might be inclined to despair of making a conclusive presentation on this subject at the outset, a beginning should nevertheless be made. It is, moreover, an exceedingly delicate task to offer any deductions or comparisons from statistics of the indoor poor in regard to the general phenomenon of pauperism without reference to the outdoor poor. For the sake of making the knowledge obtained about the one class really useful, the other must be studied.

The primary purpose of any enumeration of the feeble-minded must always be to ascertain their numbers in the country. The etiology of feeble-mindedness and what belongs to the more intimate aspects of the mentally defective—in short, all except the elementary population facts—should be left to alienists. According to the best authorities there are about 150,000 feeble-minded in the United States of so pronounced a type as to stand in need of institutional care. Of these, however, we can enumerate perhaps less than 15,000, because the vast majority are found outside institutions. So long, therefore, as this restriction remains, there is really no valid reason why the Bureau of the Census should bother to count the few feeble-minded found in special schools and other institutions. That it is possible to secure a trustworthy census of the feeble-minded, including those outside institutions, appears to be the conviction of those best qualified to speak. At all events, a census of the feeble-minded in institutions will not satisfy any one. On the other hand, an intensive investigation of this unfortunate class would doubtless accelerate the movement toward larger institutional care, and thus be of the greatest practical benefit.

In regard to the insane it is likewise urged by the most competent authorities that the fundamental purpose of a census is to find out how many insane there are in the various com-

munities. If alienists attach but slight importance to the ordinary personal statistics about the insane, beyond which a census enumeration cannot go, it is not to be presumed that other students can use them to much advantage. The clause limiting investigations to institutions, or the inmates thereof, would perhaps not materially affect any future census of benevolence. The inquiries could be carried on as now chiefly with reference to institutions. On the other hand, that part of benevolence which is exercised outside institutions, through private relief-giving organizations, might properly be included under the general head of pauperism. Or it might be advisable to draw a general distinction between public and private outdoor relief, embracing under the latter head all manner of charitable activity other than that directed by the local community.

The most striking illustration of the unfortunate operation of the restriction to institutions is, of course, that it practically frustrates any attempt to gather statistics about dependent children. The trend is more and more in the direction of non-institutional treatment of the minor wards of society. And to exclude from the census all States in which the placing-out system obtains, wholly or in part, both in public and private charities, would net results of no value for purposes of comparisons. Nearly a score of States, including some of the most populous and progressive, no longer permit the indiscriminate housing of dependent children in almshouses; nor do they provide for them except temporarily, in any other institution.

It goes almost without saying that of all the special classes the dependent children offer the most promising field for statistical research, not only because of their importance numerically and as future members of society, but because more accurate information can be obtained about them. Aside from the fact that perhaps no other form of charity work is so intelligently conducted as that relating to children, the very nature of it requires much more careful and comprehen-

sive records than, for instance, that dealing with almshouse inmates or other classes who are without a future.

The final period of section 7 provides that, in taking a census of the deaf, dumb, and blind, "the inquiries shall be confined to the following four questions; namely, name, age, sex, and post-office address."

If the above-mentioned afflicted groups of the population are to be considered along with the other special classes, it is difficult to perceive why the inquiries to be made about them should be so circumscribed. It is probably not merely out of regard for the information which can be obtained. And, if good is to be accomplished by a statistical study of them, it ought surely to be permissible to give some further account, especially of the blind, that might lead to a betterment of their condition. An illustration in point is the effort now being made to obtain a register of the adult blind in several States, with the ultimate purpose of securing to them certain advantages they do not now possess. It is conceivable that a census of the blind could easily furnish all the necessary facts for determining how many of the adult blind are in need of assistance in order to make them productive or at least active members of society.

It has been suggested that also, in regard to the special classes, it should be the object of the Bureau of the Census to utilize the data collected or collectible through State Bureaus of Statistics. From present indications, however, it does not seem likely that these State Bureaus will specialize to the extent necessary to meet the requirements of the situation. Moreover, it would be exceedingly difficult to secure the adoption of uniform schedules, even if the individual State Bureau as at present constituted could be depended upon to deal effectively with all the difficult subjects involved.

Although the Bureau of the Census is now permanently organized under the Act of March 6, 1902, it does not appear to have been the intention to make permanent regulations for all investigations to be undertaken in future decades.

Since it appears certain that some changes will be made in the law before the next decennial enumeration, it is to be hoped that section 7 of the present act will receive due consideration. The modifications suggested above could perhaps be embodied in a form something like the following:—

The Director of the Census is hereby authorized to collect statistics relating to crime, pauperism, insanity, feeble-mindedness, and benevolence, including the following dependent, defective, and delinquent classes: paupers, dependent children, inmates of benevolent institutions, the insane, the feeble-minded, the deaf and dumb, the blind, prisoners, juvenile delinquents, and inmates of reformatory institutions. And the Director of the Census shall prepare schedules containing such interrogatories as shall in his judgment be best adapted to elicit the information required under the subjects enumerated in this section, with such specifications, divisions, and particulars under each head as he shall deem necessary to that end; and all reports prepared under the provisions of this section shall be designated as "Special Reports of the Census Office." For the purpose of securing the statistics required by this section, the Director of the Census may appoint special agents when necessary, and such special agents shall receive compensation as hereinafter provided. *Provided*, That the collection and preparation of statistics authorized in this section shall not be undertaken until after the completion and return of the enumeration and of the work upon the schedules relating to the products of agriculture and to manufacturing and mechanical establishments provided for in section 7 of the Act of March 3, 1899.

Under the old method of operating the Census Office it was obviously necessary to define in minute details what should be done, and little could be left to the discretion of the Director. If it be thought unwise under the new conditions to endow this official with blanket authority in regard to the investigation of any subject or class of population, he should at least be given the latitude necessary to obtain

the best results possible from any inquiry. The proposed amended form does not aim at frequent elaborate studies of the entire field of pauperism, crime, insanity, feeble-mindedness and benevolence. The very cost of it would prohibit any such project. But, so long as the interests of economy as well as of science demand continuity in this end of census work, it would be short-sighted policy to deprive the Director of discretion, for instance, in the matter of issuing special reports dealing with some phase of the above subjects in addition to the more comprehensive decennial studies. Nor need there be the slightest apprehension that this larger discretion would give undue weight to the subjects under consideration or tend to interfere with the more important objects of the census. The point is that the present law largely defeats its own ends. In fact, we are lagging sadly behind almost every other civilized country in our statistics of the dependent, defective, and delinquent classes. This is distinctly to our discredit.